DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 119 493 PL 007 465

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TITLE Preparing Educators for Bilingual Education: Needs and a Response.
INSTITUTION New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers.
PUB DATE Nov 75
NOTE 6p.
JOURNAL CIT Language Association Bulletin; v27 n2 p14-18 Nov 1975

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Bilingual Education; Bilingual Students; *Bilingual Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); Higher Education; Language Programs; Mexican Americans; Non English Speaking; Puerto Ricans; Reading Skills; *Spanish Speaking; *Teacher Education; Teacher Educator Education

ABSTRACT

Support for bilingual education continues to grow nationwide. Increased support for the concept of using English with the non-English mother tongue (NEMT) resulted from several factors. The total population of NEMT children in the U.S. grew to 5 million in 1973, while the number of Spanish-speaking children rose to 3.2 million in 1970. The Northeast, particularly New York City, has a heavy concentration of Spanish-speaking children. The Bilingual Education Act, the Fleishmann Commission Report and New York and California studies all acknowledge the numbers of NEMT children, their educational problems and the failure of the educational system to serve their needs. It is agreed that bilingual education will strengthen the child's educational progress, enhance his self-concept and aid reading in both languages. Several studies show that bilingual education is effective; however, there is now an acute shortage of bilingual teachers. The State University of New York at Albany has a successful Master's program for bilingual education administrators and coordinators who could train other bilingual teachers. The program features a strong bilingual staff, a helpful advisory group, access to all SUNY resources and field experience in bilingual schools. (CHK)

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PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION: NEEDS AND A RESPONSE

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Support for the concept of bilingual education and for implementation of bilingual education programs in the schools continues to grow nationwide. An inevitable accompaniment of this growth is an increasing need for training educators for work in such programs. Increased support for the concept of using the non-English mother tongue (NEMT), i.e., the child's first language, as well as English as mediums of instruction in school programs is the result of a number of factors.

Population

One factor accounting for such growth has been the increasing number of NEMT children in our schools. The total population of all non-English-background school-age children in the United States has shown a rise from 3.2 million in 1960,[1] to 5 million in 1973.[2] The number of school-aged Spanish-background children has grown from roughly 1.7 million in 1960,[3] to 3.2 million in 1970.[4]

This growth in numbers of NEMT children nationwide has been paralleled by an increase in numbers of such children in the Northeast. For example, there were in 1970 in New York State an estimated 160,000 NEMT students who had "significant English language handicaps."[5] More than 95,000 of the Puerto Rican school population of 250,000 in New York City had English-language difficulties in 1970.[6] This compares with only 40,000 non-English-speaking Puerto Rican students in New York City in 1957.[7] In 1972 these figures had risen to over 100,000 Spanish-background students in New York City public schools having English-language problems.[8] There have been comparable increases in NEMT (primarily Spanish background) children in other areas of the Northeast.

Evidence of Failure

There is widespread agreement that traditional approaches to the education of minority NEMT children in our schools have been inadequate. The problem was recognized by the Congress in the opening statement of the Bilingual Education Act:

> The Congress hereby finds that one of the most acute educational problems in the United States is that which involves millions of children of limited English-speaking ability because they come from environments where the dominant language is other than English.[9]

The Fleishmann Commission Report, cited above, noted that in New York State:

> . . . the most distressing incidence of academic failure the Commission has uncovered occurs among a group of children who are handicapped by a language barrier in the classroom -- those children whose native language is not English and whose difficulty comprehending English significantly impedes successful school performance.[10]

Statistical evidence provides persuasive testimony to the failure of traditional approaches in the education of NEMT minority children:

> California made a study of the educational disparity between the Mexican-American and his fellow citizens as of 1960. It found that the level of education of Spanish-surnamed individuals was well below the level of the total population and was even below that of the non-white population. More than half of the males and nearly half the females 14 years old and over had not gone beyond the eighth grade. By contrast, only 27.9 percent of the males and 25 percent of the females over 14 in the total population had not gone beyond the eighth grade.[11]

And in New York:

> Puerto Rican pupils account for 22.8 percent of the total school population of New York City. Of these Puerto Rican pupils, more than one third (95,000) were described by the 1970 school census as non-English speaking. Of this total, approximately 25,000 are receiving instruction in English as a second language, and fewer than 6,000 are enrolled in completely bilingual-bicultural programs. The results of the English language difficulties of Puerto Rican pupils are tragically clear: these pupils are lowest in reading scores, highest in dropout rates, and weakest in academic preparation of all pupils in New York State.[12]

Support for Bilingual Education

Such statistics and others[13] strongly suggest that traditional approaches have not been successful in

educating NEMT students in our schools. Thus, it is not surprising that support for a bilingual-bicultural approach to the education of such children has come from educators and statesmen at all levels concerned with equality of educational opportunity. The National Education Association, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the New York State Regents, and the New York State Commission on the Cost, Quality, and Finance of Elementary and Secondary Schools have all issued statements or position papers supportive of the concept of bilingual education.[14] Further, recent opinions delivered by the United States Supreme Court, requiring special attention to language problems of minority children, suggest that bilingual education is one choice in meeting the problem.[15]

In addition, the "traditional" arguments in favor of bilingual education still appear valid:[16]

- if all school instruction is in English, then to the extent the child is deficient in English, his concept development throughout the school curriculum will be retarded.
- teaching the curriculum through the child's native language and thus strengthening knowledge of that language, while at the same time teaching English as a second language, will result both in assurance that the child understands the curriculum content, and also that a vital national resource – the child's bilingualism – is maintained.
- recognition and utilization of the child's unique strengths – his first language and culture – will result in enhanced self-concept and avoid the psychological damage done if these are ignored or suppressed by the school.
- teaching the bilingual child literacy in his strongest language first should result in the final analysis in his learning to read English more rapidly.
- establishment of new bilingual programs in the schools requires school personnel representing the majority culture to confront their own feelings about minority students, and to provide something beyond lip service in recognition of the legitimacy of cultural pluralism.

Arguments such as these from powerful educational, governmental, and political groups are likely to result in increased support for bilingual education programs in the schools. A concomitant increase in need for training educators for work in such programs appears inevitable. Before examining in more detail the need for training such educators, however, we might consider evidence for the success of bilingual education programs themselves. Do such programs make a difference in the education of NEMT children, and, if so, where is the evidence?

Perhaps the most comprehensive summary of research evidence supporting bilingual education programs is that compiled by Perry Zirkel.[17] The studies cited by Zirkel include positive results in experimental bilingual programs in several parts of the world, as well as programs in Texas, Florida, and California. Evidence for the success of bilingual programs in New York City includes findings in an evaluation report by Vivian Horner.[18] Second grade children in the bilingual program being evaluated "made significant gains in math over the school year," "far exceeded control children on reading measures," and "Spanish dominant children greatly exceeded English dominant children on reading measures."[19]

Finally, additional research evidence supporting the bilingual approach to the education of NEMT children is found in an article by Richard Hall.[20] Hall cites a number of studies which support the view that learning to read first in the mother tongue not only results in reading more quickly (in that language), but is also likely to result in reading sooner in English (the second language).

To summarize: There is widespread evidence that the schools have failed to educate minority group children whose first language is other than English; there is growing research evidence that bilingual education is one effective response to the special needs of these children; there is increasing support for bilingual education among influential educators, statesmen, and minority group members themselves, and such support for bilingual education is likely to lead to a demand for more and better-trained educators to teach in and administer bilingual education programs.

Need for Training Educators

Evidence from several sources points to a critical shortage of qualified bilingual educators to staff bilingual programs. Commissioner of Education John Ottina has recently suggested there is a bilingual teacher shortage of 50,000 to 70,000, and he sees this "as a problem lasting many years."[21] This estimate may be somewhat low. The number of school-age (6-18) NEMT children in the United States has been estimated at five million. Using a teacher-student ratio of 1:25, we derive a figure of 200,000 bilingual teachers needed to serve these children. (This does

not include other educators such as administrators and coordinators needed for bilingual programs.)

The federal government currently supports fewer than 200 bilingual education programs. The total number of teachers involved in these is probably not over 3,000. Yet the effort to involve more and more bilingual children in bilingual programs, and the fact that even without new programs the number of children involved increases each year as each of the projects expands to higher grades – these factors all strongly suggest that an acute shortage of well-prepared bilingual teachers will continue for some time. This situation appears to be particularly critical in New York State, in which Spanish-surnamed Americans make up close to 10 percent of all public school students, yet only 1.1 percent of the public schools professional staff is of this background.[22]

Response to the Need

The State University of New York at Albany has, with the help of an EPDA grant, responded to this need over the past three academic years (1971-74). During this period, thirty bilingual educators have been enrolled in a Masters level program, with emphasis on preparation of "second-level" bilingual educators. We have focused on preparation of certificated bilingual educators for work as administrators, curriculum coordinators, and in other second-level positions in bilingual programs. By emphasizing the training of educators for such positions, we have in effect been training teacher trainers and thus capitalizing on a "multiplier effect," which enables our graduates to reach and train other bilingual educators.

Several of the sixteen graduates of the first two years of our program became classroom teachers in bilingual programs, two went on to further graduate work, but eight became bilingual program directors, associate directors, or obtained other second-level positions. We expect an even higher percentage of the fourteen fellows currently enrolled in our bilingual Masters program to obtain such positions. Such an emphasis will be continued in the future.

Brief Evaluation of Response: The First Three Years

The principal broad objective of the first three years (1971-74) of the bilingual education project was development at the State University of New York at Albany of a bilingual education program which will provide educators with the knowledge and skills to work more effectively, and to train others to work more effectively, in bilingual education programs in the schools. This goal has in large measure been accomplished. A new sequence of courses in bilingual education leading to a Masters degree in that area was officially approved by the University in 1973. Thus, investment of federal funds has, in this case, resulted in institutional change.

The principal strengths of this new program include:

– a strong bilingual staff supported by federal funds. Such a staff has enabled us to teach an important segment of the courses in the program through Spanish as well as in English.

– an Advisory Group composed of educators and laymen representing Hispanic communities, the State Education Department, the New York City Schools, other local school districts, current and past participants, and the university. This group has proved invaluable in providing planning and evaluation services for the bilingual project during its periodic meetings (at least once per semester).

– the flexible and interdisciplinary nature of the program which enables bilingual educators in our program to draw upon resources at SUNY at Albany within the School of Education, the Departments of Puerto Rican Studies, Anthropology, Social Sciences, and Hispanic Studies, the Educational Communication Center, and others. Physical facilities at SUNY are excellent. Strong Masters programs in Teaching English as a Second Language and in Foreign Language Education provide resources in these areas. Further, program flexibility permits effective responses to Advisory Group suggestions. For example, in response to Advisory Group suggestions, bilingual fellows have been provided with special sections of courses in educational administration and in curriculum development.

– field-centered experiences in bilingual programs in local schools near Albany, in New York City, and with the Bilingual Unit of the State Education Department. The latter have proven particularly valuable for participants who work closely with State Education Department personnel in such activities as reading and evaluating proposals for bilingual programs, then with logistic assistance from the SED conduct field visits to bilingual program sites, and compare proposal specifications with actual program organization and activities.

– through the efforts of our bilingual project, bilingual classes have been established in a nearby elementary school. This has enabled our project participants to work with bilingual children on a regular basis throughout the school year, testing the theories discussed at the university in a

bilingual classroom setting. Project efforts here have met with enthusiasm from the Hispanic community surrounding the school, from portions of the Anglo community as demonstrated by their requests to have their non-Hispanic-background children enrolled in bilingual classes, and from the administration of that school system in public statements on a local television documentary and by letter. Further evidence of the success of this component comes from pre- and post-test scores for literacy in Spanish taken by the Hispanic-background children taught by our fellows. The scores show consistent improvement in reading in Spanish by the elementary children in our bilingual classes.

– institution-wide support for the concept of bilingual education in general, and for our bilingual program in particular, has been strong. The Academic Vice President, the Dean of the School of Education, department chairmen, and faculty members both in and outside of the School of Education have met with participants and project personnel. They have expressed support for the goals and activities of the program and have contributed creative suggestions concerning its operation. Financial support for several bilingual fellows in addition to those supported under EPDA has been provided by the Dean of the School of Education and other sources at SUNYA.

Although there was no money available for formal evaluation of our bilingual project, we did have both formative and summative evaluation on an informal, no-cost basis. The role of our Advisory Group in this evaluation was noted above. In addition, we have had several site visits from USOE personnel who observed the program in operation, visited classes, and interviewed participants and staff. Indications are that they were pleased with the progress of the project.

Summative evaluation has taken the form of questionnaires eliciting the opinions of participants concerning their experiences in the project. Responses have been consistently favorable on these instruments, which have been included in project final reports. In addition, we are gathering data on graduates from the bilingual project's Masters program after they have been in the field one and two years. We are attempting, to identify those components of the project which participants *in retrospect*, after having been on the job in bilingual programs, feel were most useful and why, those which were least useful, and what components could be added to the program.

There were, of course, some weaknesses perceived in our program. All but one have been rather minor problems, such as finding adequate housing. The one persistent problem which we have faced, however, is providing participants with an adequate methods component which will enable participants to be better teachers of a wide spectrum of subjects (math, social studies, reading, etc.) through Spanish in bilingual programs. One way in which we have attempted to overcome this weakness is by inviting excellent bilingual teachers of these subjects to Albany to provide workshops and demonstrations in these areas. We have had a fair measure of success with this approach but propose a more permanent solution in the program for 1974-75.

In sum, these first three years have seen the State University of New York at Albany respond effectively to an important educational need by establishment of a Masters program in bilingual education. We intend, by means of a proposed grant for 1974-75, to consolidate and expand upon the gains made thus far for training bilingual educators for more effective service in bilingual education programs in the schools.

Paper presented at the 1974 NYSAFLT Colloquium, 3 May, Albany, N.Y.

[1]"The Challenge of Bilingualism" in Reginald Bishop Jr. ed., *Foreign language Teaching: Challenges to the Profession* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1965), p. 96.

[2]*Report on Education of the Disadvantaged*, 7, 9(April 10, 1974), 5.

[3]Bishop, p. 96.

[4]This figure was obtained by applying the 34% figure for 5-19 year old Spanish-surname persons in five Southwestern states (noted by Bishop, p. 97), to the 1970 census figure of 9.6 million "persons of Spanish language" in the U.S. From: *Persons of Spanish Ancestry, Supplementary Report* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1973), p. 11.

[5]*The Fleishmann Commission Report, Pt. III, Vol. II* (New York: The New York State Commission on the Cost, Quality and Firance of Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1972), p. 1.

[6]Ibid, p. 2.

[7]Mary Jenkins, *Bilingual Education in New York City* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1971), p. 10.

[8]*Language Ability Survey of Pupils in New York City Public Schools As of October 31, 1972* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1973), p. 3.

[9]Title VII, United State Elementary and Secondary Education Act, The Bilingual Education Act (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), p. 13.

[10]*The Fleishmann Commission Report*, p. 1.

[11]*The Invincible Minority . . . Pero No Vencibles* (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1966), p. 6.

[12]New York State Regents, *Bilingual Education: A Statement of Policy and Proposed Action by the Regents of the University of the State of New York* (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1972), p. 6.

[13]See for example: *Equal Educational Opportunity for Puerto Rican Children: Hearings Before the Senate Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, Part 8* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970); *Bilingual Education, Parts 1 and 2, Hearings Before the Special Subcommittee on Bilingual Education, U.S. Senate* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967); *Bilingual Education Programs: Hearings Before the General Subcommittee on Education, House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967); and *Proceedings of the National Conference on Educational Opportunities for Mexican Americans* (Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1968).

[14]These statements are contained in the following documents: *Brief for the National Education Association and the California Teachers Association as Amici Curiae* (in the Lau vs. Nichols case) (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1974), p. 12; *Journal of Teacher Education*, 24, 4(Winter 1973), 264-65; *Bilingual Education: New York State Regents Position Paper Number 16* (August 1972), p. 12, 13; *The Fleishmann Commission Report, Pt. III, Vol. II* (1972), p. 3.

[15]"Full Text of Opinions: Lau vs. Nichols," *The United States Law Week*, 42, 28(January 22, 1974), 4166.

[16]Most of these arguments in favor of bilingual education were advanced by Bruce Gaarder of the U.S. Office of Education in testimony in support of the Bilingual Education Act before the U.S. Senate in 1967. They originally appeared in *The Congressional Record* (May 18, 1967) S7102-03, and have since been reprinted in several texts.

[17]Perry Allan Zirkel, *The Positive Research Results of Bilingual Education* (Hartford: Connecticut State Department of Education, 1971), mimeo. p. 1-4.

[18]Vivian Horner, *Bilingual School Program: Final Report* (New York: New York City Board of Education, 1971).

[19]Ibid, p. 54.

[20]Richard Hall, *Learning to Read in Two Languages* (Philadelphia: The School District of Philadelphia, 1972), p. 1-7.

[21]*Report on Education of the Disadvantaged*, 7, 9(April 10, 1974), 5.

[22]*Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Public School Students and Staff, New York State, 1972-1973* (Albany, N.Y.: The State Education Department, 1974), p. 3, 9.